

TROPIC OF XVII

NOVEMBER 13-15, FT. LAUDERDALE

NEIL GAIMAN CHARLES VESS

Tropicon XVII

Program Book

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On NEIL GAIMAN

by Pete Rawlik

Neil Gaiman became a cult hero with his immensely popular and award-winning *Sandman* graphic novel series. The series itself was hailed by Norman Mailer as "a comic strip for intellectuals", sold over a million copies a year. Issue # 19 took the 1991 World Fantasy Award for best short story thus making it the first comic ever to be awarded a literary award.

Neil Gaiman is, among other things, the author of: the international bestseller,

Good Omens, which he co-authored with Terry Pratchett; the 1997 bestseller, *Neverwhere* (soon to be a major motion picture from Jim Henson Productions to be directed by Jesse Dylan); and a collection of short stories, *Smoke and Mirrors*. Clive Barker, Tad Williams, and Peter Straub have all praised Gaiman's literary merit, and even Stephen King admits that he is "a little intimidating."

Gaiman seems to have his hands in everything as he writes short stories and novels, songs and screenplays. This year Gaiman wrote the English language script for Miyazaki's record-breaking Japanese film *Mononoke Hime* (*Princess Mononoke*), which Miramax will be releasing in the U. S. in 1999. He also penned the critically acclaimed *Babylon 5* episode "Day of the Dead". To top it all off he will soon make his acting debut in a Salvador Dali biopic.

An enigmatic personality who is rarely found without his dark sunglasses and custom-altered leather jacket of dubious origins, Neil Gaiman's status as an underground pop-culture hero is exploding into mainstream stardom.

His popularity can be gauged by the hundreds of websites and chat groups dedicated to both him and his creations, as well the fact that musicians such as Tori Amos and Metallica have written songs inspired by Gaiman's work. Tori Amos went so far as to include an excerpt from Gaiman's upcoming novel, *Stardust* in her concert tour book. A faerie story for adults, *Stardust* will be released in January of 1999.

Some Things That I Know About NEIL GAIMAN

as revealed by Charles Vess

Neil loves to read out loud. Always the most pleasurable moments over the last several years were those times when the phone would ring and the voice on the other end would quietly say, "Have you got a moment, I want to read you something...". It would be Neil and that 'something' would inevitably be the latest, in progress, chapter of *Stardust*. I would stop drawing, settle back and be thoroughly entertained for 10 minutes, or a half hour by the electronic voice representation of a good friend traveling over many miles of thin metal wires and at last coming to rest in my ear. But here's the oddness of that moment. I couldn't wait for Neil to end the reading, exchange a few pleasantries and hang up. You see my mind and my fingers would be alive with the possibilities of the world Neil had just gifted me with and I would be consumed with desire to get back onto the drawing board and explore that world.

Neil has a proper Englishman's love of gardening. Just, by god, like in all those Victorian novels and charming (but rather quaint) black and white British movies. A conversation with Neil can and almost inevitably will, veer from the intricacies of say James Branch Cabell's religious hierarchy to the easiest way to plant (and harvest) a row of potatoes (under 6 inches of straw, no back breaking hoeing involved in this method).

Do not under any circumstances try to catch Neil out on some obscure bit of knowledge concerning a low level Mesopotamian river god or ANY interesting (or for that matter not so very interesting) fact that pertains to the mythological underpinnings of our planet. Current politics, American sports or which horse is going to place in the sixth race this Saturday at Belmont is, however, fair game.

If it's a beautiful Sunday afternoon and you decide to go for spin in the new automobile with Neil AND HE IS DRIVING, make sure your insurance premiums are paid up. Please note: deciding whether to use your seat belt or not because you may not wish to wrinkle your new silk suit or "you are just getting out at the next corner" is not an option. Instead use your Sunday afternoon to have Neil host a small party on your lawn, his genteel manner and gracious hosting skills are more than up for the occasion.

Neil knows the correct manner to build and light a bonfire. Guy Fawkes could've learned something from him.

I just thought you might like to know that Neil loves (shudder) Broadway musicals. This toe curling thought is thrown in to provide some balance in my somewhat biased biographical comments here.

A walk through the woods surrounding his home will find Neil stopping to rhapsodize on a centuries old nursery rhyme from a recently discovered book. You will then be told that "Rub-a-dub,dub, three men in a tub..." isn't really about three fat, jolly men in a tub, as you have been taught all your young pre-school life, but is a reference to a rustic medieval peep show that in turn refers to some other aspect of medieval life. And so it goes: random bits of knowledge that seemingly have NO CONNECTION WHATSOEVER are ritually placed on a back shelf in Neil's imagination and over time carefully dissected. Later when the facts of that conversation are meaningless scraps of information scattered about in your own memory a script from Neil will call for a certain series of events. Only as you begin to draw those images on paper, will you recall that particular rhyme and that conversation. Then you will realize that the entire plot of the story you are working on hinges on the significance of those seemingly sparse rhymes read to us as children.

Neil is a very good friend.

I am very happy to know and work with Neil and I'm looking forward to many, many long years of future projects together.



On Charles Vess

by Pete Rawlik

Charles Vess is one of today's premier fantasy artists. As a child, Charles had two loves: drawing and comic books. At the age of nine he drew his first strip and has been firmly entrenched in the field of fantasy art ever since.

Charles earned his B.F.A. from Virginia Commonwealth University and has since gone on to produce work for such diverse markets as *Heavy Metal* and *Reader's Digest*. He has also been an art instructor at the Parson's School of Design in New York City, and is currently artist-in-residence at the William King Regional Arts Center in Abingdon, Virginia.

Vess' work has been exhibited all over the country, from the Delaware Art Museum to Utah's Repartee Gallery. In 1993, his art enthralled the fans of the genre at the "Mythic Garden" exhibit in Devon, England.

While Charles is best known for his work as a comic book artist, most notably producing covers for *Swamp Thing* and *Books of Magic*, he has not limited himself to traditional comic book material. In 1988, he illustrated an old classic *Little Red Riding Hood*. That same year, he fulfilled a personal ambition with another classic tale; namely, an illustrated edition of William Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*.

In 1990, Charles was honored with an Ink Pot Award for Excellence in Comics. Since that time, he has also won two World Fantasy Awards, including one with Neil Gaiman for best short story.

Eschewing the more violent aspects of the genre, preferring to concentrate on the benign, Charles describes his work as "fantasy with a softer edge". When asked how he would like others to react to his paintings, he replies: "I just want them to feel like they've just had this wonderful walk in the woods, and they really enjoyed themselves and are relaxed . . ."

Several Things about Charles Vess

as revealed by Neil Gaiman

Theodor Kittelson (1857-1914) was the greatest painter of trolls there ever was. He was a Norwegian recluse who drew and sketched water trolls and mountain trolls and strange, mad-eyed hill-sized trolls with pines growing on their backs. He lived on an island in the Norwegian Sea, two hours away by horse and (in the winter) sledge from the nearest town.

And when he heard that another artist had said that he too was going to be drawing trolls, Kittelson is reputed to have said "He? Sketch trolls? He has never seen a troll in his life."

Which makes sense, of course. The reason that Kittelson drew such remarkable trolls was that he saw them. Just as the reason Arthur Rackham drew such sublime fairy creatures, such strange and gnarly tree-creatures, such grotesque gnomes, was that he saw them.

And the reason that Charles Vess draws such astonishing things, such beautiful things and such strange things, the reason that he draws all manner of fairy creatures and boggarts and nixies and witches and wonders so very well is simple.

He sees them. He draws what he sees.

I have known Charles Vess for a decade (or less, I confess I've forgotten -- say nine years, I guess).

This is how to spot the herbaceous or lesser spotted Charles Vess: he has an easygoing, gentle smile and he has, no kidding and in all honesty, a twinkling sort of glint in his eyes. I've seen it. His manner is quiet and reserved, and he is extremely polite. Anyone with all four of those characteristics is probably Charles Vess, assuming that he can also paint like a demon.

He likes really fine single malt scotches. I just mention this in passing, and not to encourage anyone reading this to buy Charles a really good single malt scotch (anything over ten years old should be fine).

I love working with Charles. It's easy.

He's a good person to spend time with. The first time we got together to talk about *The Books of Magic* we were going to do together, we went up to the Hundred Acre Wood (it's actually called Galleon's Lap when you're outside of the Milne books) and just sat around in the heather up where the pine trees blow, and looked at the trees, and talked about what we were going to be doing. About rivers of blood, and the old ballads, and little houses on chicken legs. And sometimes we didn't chat at all, we just sat.

He's the finest audience in the world. When you read to him, he chuckles. Honest-to-god chuckles. When I was writing *Stardust*, at the end of each chapter I'd phone Charles up, and I'd read him what I'd written (occasionally apologising on the way for not being able to read my own handwriting) and whenever I got to a good bit, he'd chuckle. It was wonderful.

I wound up writing things because I wanted to see what he would paint.

Charles is someone who is doing what he loves.

He is an optimist, in the broadest sense of the word. Charles lives in a *good* world.

He's not an unrealistic optimist, though. He's sensible. When we won the World Fantasy Award for best short story, in Tucson in 1991, Charles missed it. He was playing table-tennis. This is because he knew that we wouldn't win (well, it was about as likely as our being elected joint deputy Pope), so he went off to do something sensible instead. (That we won is beside the point in this anecdote.)

This summer Charles's wife Karen was very seriously injured in a car accident. She's spent the last several months undergoing surgery, and in rehab learning how to walk and operate her body once more.

The last time I saw Charles I asked him how he was doing.

"Mostly I'm grateful," he said, like one of those guys in those heartwarming articles in *Reader's Digest*. Only this was for real. "There are people in her rehab who had the same injuries as Karen who are going to spend the rest of their lives in wheelchairs. She's going to be able to walk again. We're really lucky."

And he meant it. He is a remarkable man, in many ways.

Charles Vess lives in rural Virginia. Also he lives in Faerie. He draws what he sees.



Life After NEIL

by Caitlín Kiernan

"With open eyes (ah woe is me!)
Asleep, and dreaming fearfully,
Fearfully dreaming, yet, I wis,
Dreaming that alone, which is - "
Coleridge (1816)

I honestly never intended to write for comics, and I certainly never thought I'd find myself coming onstage after Neil Gaiman, being asked to flesh out and continue the dream world that he had created in *The Sandman*. If ever I fell ass backwards into anything, it was my work for Vertigo and *The Dreaming*, but I suppose if this is to be a Coherent and Informative Essay, then I've already gotten ahead of myself.

Years ago, a friend nagged and cajoled until I finally broke down and read the *Sandman* #1. I was not much for comics back then and was genuinely, and pleasantly, suprised with what I discovered in that first story, "Sleep of the Just". I was immediately hooked and read straight through #8. This was potent stuff, smart and weird and beautifully-written, and hardly a costume-clad superbozo in sight. There was real horror here, in "24 Hours" for instance, and sublime moments of a much subtler darkness (most notably, the "The Sound of Her Wings"). By the time the story wound its way to *A Game of You* in 1991, I was very, very hooked.

So, three years later, when I got the chance to write a story for the prose anthology , *The Sandman: Book of Dreams*, I was thrilled. I absolutely didn't think the piece would actually be accepted (to say I was still an "unknown" at that point would be flattering), but "Escape Artist", my prequel to *A Game of You*, was accepted for the book. Very cool, thought I, and the last I'd probably ever get to write in Neil's world, I figured. So I completed my first novel, *Silk*, and a host of short stories and was very pleased at the boost to my writing career that had come of *The Sandman: Book of Dreams* sale.

And then, while I was attending the May '96 World Horror Convention in Eugene, Oregon, I

got a phone call from Neil asking if I'd like to do a story arc about the reincarnated Corinthian for Vertigo's fledgling, post-*Sandman* title, *The Dreaming*. He knew I had a somewhat fetishistic fascination with knives, and Vertigo editor Alissa Kwitney had been unable to find anyone suitable for a Corinthian story. I think I did bother to ask what I'd be paid, but later confessed that I'd have done it for free (or less). After Eugene and a few days in Los Angeles, I returned to Athens, Georgia (where I was living at the time), and quickly discovered that I had no idea whatsoever how to write a comic book script. But Neil sent me a handful of sample scripts and by the end of the summer I'd completed the three issues of "Souvenirs", in which the new Corinthian and Matthew the Raven pursue a victim of the first Corinthian turned eyeball - obsessed serial killer and his transgendered "boy"friend.

Drawn by Peter Doherty, the story seemed to sit very well with most of the readers and Alisa asked if I had any other ideas for *Dreaming* stories. Which led to my writing a loose sequel to "Souvenirs", called "Unkindness of One", in which Matthew once more becomes Matt John Cable and is forced to face his ex-wife Abby and what he thinks is his old nemesis, Anton Arcane. Response was even better this time around (and I wasn't believing for a moment that any of this was real, mind you) and, after a one-shot called "Restitution" in which I returned Irving, um, Goldie to the *Dreaming*, I was asked to handle year three with Peter Hogan (who'd written the second *Dreaming* arc, "The Lost Boy", and the one-shot "Ice").

Late in May '97, Neil, Alisa, Peter, and I had a meeting where it was decided that it was time *The Dreaming* moved in a different direction, abandoning the title's original anthology format in favor of longer, integrated stories, avoiding what Neil referred to as the default *Dreaming* plot: "Person A, who you've never met before nor do you care about, has a problem. They are going to go into *The Dreaming* and come out and their problem will be some way roolved from their experiences in *The Dreaming*."

And so, as Peter and I pondered ways to revitalize *The Dreaming*, Neil proposed something big - that we burn down the House of Mystery - which we did. The result was an eight - issue story arc, "Many Mansions"

(currently, we're up to Part five, "November Eve"). As it turned out, I wrote five and a half of these (Peter had become very busy with his forthcoming "Marquee Moon" and "Love Street" projects for *Sandman Presents*) and sometime that fall Alisa asked if I'd be interested in taking on *The Dreaming* solo for year four.

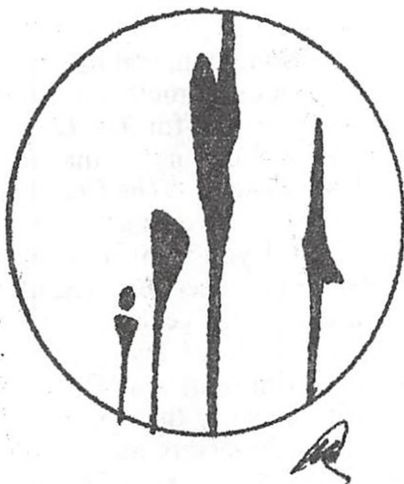
Now, understand, this was all a radical departure from the direction I had planned for my writing to take. *Silk* had sold to Penguin in January and was generating a very positive pre-release buzz and I needed to get to work on a second novel (at this writing, the second novel is only just starting to take shape), plan a smallish book tour, write short stories - the sorts of things I'd always seen myself doing if I should ever actually "make it" as a writer. So, this was a very big decision, choosing to write for DC full time, one which I knew would significantly alter my professional life. There was, of course, never any doubt that I would say yes.

A few months later I began work on another *Sandman* related project, *The Girl Who Would Be Death*, a four-part mini-series which began this October. Originally suggested by Vertigo editor Shelly Roeberg as a story about a "cult that worships Death of the Endless," it would eventually become a story about a rather spooky girl in New Orleans who comes into possession of both the *Magdalene Grimoire* (the book that Roderick Burgess had used to imprison Morpheus in 1916) and one of Death's sigils. When she tries to use the ankh and the secrets contained in the Grimoire to force Death to return her dead lover, well, all sort of extremely unpleasant things begin to happen.

The obvious question, then, and the one I get a lot these days, goes something like, "So, what's next for you and for *The Dreaming*?" And it's a question I can never manage more than a partial response to. *The Dreaming* will continue to follow the events set in motion in "Souvenirs" (and if you want to catch up the easy way, there will be a second *Dreaming* trade paperback out early next year, called *Through the Gates of Horn and Ivory*). Lucien, Matthew, the Corinthian, and Echo will be major figures in the story that follows "Many Mansions". These characters, and many others, who were the supporting cast of *The Sandman*,

will become fully-realized characters in their own right. And (here's a teaser for ya) somewhere a year or so down the line, there will be a death (a really real death) of a major *Sandman/Dreaming* character. As for me, I've found that juggling's not so difficult once you learn how to grab hold of the handle of the chainsaw and not the blade. Which is to say that there are more novels and I've just made a deal with Gauntlet Press to release a limited edition of my first short story collection late in '99 or early in 2000, which will be called *Tales of Pain and Wonder* and include at least twenty-two stories.

And I think the most important thing that *The Dreaming* (and by extension, Neil Gaiman) has given me is the opportunity to write a sort of fantasy that is quite outside the grittier "real world" of my usual prose. A world where pumpkin-headed scarecrows talk and smoke cigars, a world of magic and faeries and little golden gargoyles, where nightmares have identity crises and every book that anyone ever dreamed of writing is meticulously cataloged by a man who used to be a raven. In a way, it has been (and continues to be) a rediscovery of the fictions of my childhood - Lewis Carroll, Tolkien, C. S. Lewis, Stephen R. Donaldson and too many others to count - and of the alternative physics and biologies and psychologies that govern those sorts of universes. It isn't *The Dreaming* precisely as Neil would have written it (and sometime I wish it was), but it is proving to be a wonderfully strange and exciting trip, one that began a decade ago (without my even knowing it at the time) and that I sincerely hope will continue for at least a little while longer.



Poetry

Louisa's Angels

by Jane Yolen

When God seized you on the street,
so hard you fell down, biting your tongue
angels sang above in chorus, like sirens:
"Holy, holy, holy" in three languages,
none of them your own.

It was a brain storm, an electrical conversion.
You tell me this straight-faced,
haloed by the shadows of Adams House,
the light of heaven long extinguished in you.
Medicine holds the godhead now;
angels like dreams, faded into stories.
You are relieved of the saint's awful burden.

If the visions of poets, like saints,
are but a convergence of electrons,
the snapping together of synapses,
then doctors are the severest critics,
dosing us out of our dreams.
Poems must begin with seizure:
on the street corner, in the shower stall,
in the singing of angels,
'Holy, holy, holy'
from the brightness of the empty page.

Chairman's Message

from Pete Rawlik

I feel like Willy Wonka.

My Co-Chair, my wife, hates that movie. She has a dread childhood fear of Oompa-Loompas. Everytime the paddle boat scene comes on, she runs screaming from the room. (I suspect that my wife is not so much afraid of Oompa-Loompas, as she is of vernicious kinids.)

Despite the family bias, I still feel like Willy Wonka.

We've worked long and hard to get to where we are today. There are literally dozens of invisible people that need to be thanked, particularly those that I've already forgotten about. So before I forget anymore: Thanks. Thank you all. "This is where all of my dreams become reality . . .and some of my realities become dreams!"

I'm still not sure what we've done here. Neil Gaiman, my favorite living author; Charles Vess, an artist whose work has enriched and inspired me for as long as I can remember; Hal Clement who helped teach me (and many others I'm sure) to read; Mike Resnick, a strong, clear voice echoing out of Africa; Adam Castro, a dear friend and a hell of a writer; INHOUSE, South Florida's premier musicians; the list goes on and on.

"Hold your breath. Make a wish. Count to Three."

I hope you find yourself in an interesting place at Tropicon XVII. We've tried to make it as fun and as different as possible. We've tried to make it a convention that not only presents the guests but gives you the opportunity to get up close and personal with some of the most creative people alive today.

So sit back relax, and enjoy yourself. And in the words of the esteemed confectioneer,

"Ladies and Gentleman, welcome to the chocolate room!"

Chairwoman's Message

from Shirlene Ananayo-Rawlik

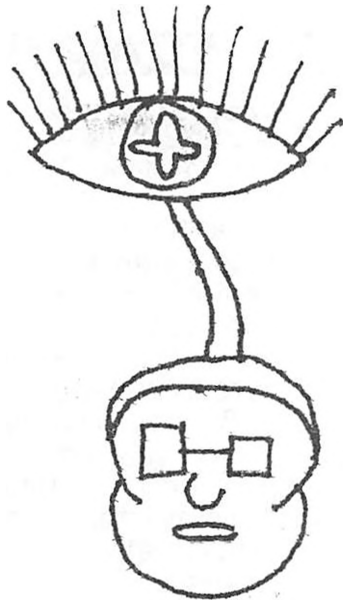
Welcome, one and all to Tropicon XVII!!

I hope that you're enjoying your time in my husband's "chocolate room", or as I like to term it, the "labor of love". There were a variety of reasons behind our initial decision to become co-chairs (the largest one being that no one else seemed to want the job at that time!). But those have all paled in comparison to the continual looks of joy and awe (with an occasional glimpse of terror --when faced with the reality of tasks still to come) that Pete's face gets when he realizes that he'll have the opportunity to host his favorite author and artist!

As for me, well, I'll be happy when the convention is over and folks have told me that they really enjoyed themselves and I can go back to the full-time task of being a pregnant woman with "medical conditions".

In any event, I hope that you also enjoy this really awesome Program Book. My husband sweated over the preliminary layout and let me run amok and "tweak" at it a little bit before "putting it to bed". Besides the beautiful cover art that Charles (& DC Comics) let us use, there are wonderful essays by our guests on each other and a third essay by Caitlin on Neil. Neil also permitted us to re-print fiction that some of you might recognize from *Frank Frazetta's Fantasy Magazine*. Adam donated an original short piece that still gives me the "willies" and probably will give my unborn baby nightmares for several weeks! Last, but not least, Jane Yolen contributed a thought-provoking poem in response to our unabashed request for Program Book contributions. Scattered throughout are pieces of filler art from the likes of William Rostler to Mary Hanson Roberts to local favorite, Peter "Mal" Barker, and a few others whose names I cannot recall. No matter, they're mentioned on page 1.

Thanks to everyone who helped out with the convention. If we missed your name in the Staff section, it was not intentional. Forgive me, for it was my task to compile it.



Fiction

TOY

by Adam-Troy Castro

Mix-and-match, mix-and-match.

A universe of possibilities. Of opportunities. Change the eyes, the lips, the nose, the hair, arrange them differently on an otherwise similarly shaped face, and you have enough different personalities to populate a world. Were I good at math, I might be able to figure out how many. But the total must be in the millions.

More, if I don't limit myself to bilateral symmetry. (Have you ever noticed how many real faces don't?)

I walk the streets with bandaged face. Blood still seeps now and then through the freshly changed gauze. People recoil, look away, wonder what changed me into what I am. I don't tell them that I did. It is a necessity. Artists work from blank canvases. If no blank

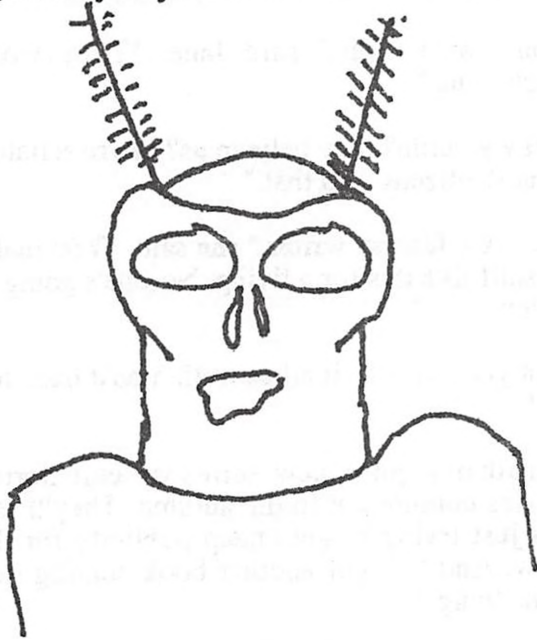
canvases are available, one must be made. And if the previous picture can't be painted over, it must be erased. In my case, I used a steel file. Bit by bit, a little every day, as much as my tolerance for pain permitted. Turning the unwanted nose from proboscis to carefully sanded hole. It took the better part of a month just to do the physical labor, most of a second month to recover from the nasty infection that followed. I always washed with pure alcohol afterward but that wasn't enough.

The ears didn't bleed quite as much. Or the lips. I would take the eyes but I need them to appreciate the game. To see the universe of possibilities in what I'm doing.

I open one of the jars on my refrigerated shelf. It is filled with lips. I've taken quite a few the last few months: one pair from a motorist with a flat tire, another from a convenience store clerk, a third from a pretty girl waiting for the bus in the rain. Maybe two dozen others -- the same people who contributed to the ear and nose and eyebrow jars. It wasn't hard, arranging their contributions: just a quiet spot, and a handkerchief filled with chloroform, and then a few minute's work with a scalpel. Please note: murder did not enter to it. I didn't kill anybody I harvested. Why should I? It wasn't their lives I was after. It was their parts. Their wonderfully varied parts.

I take the lips from the jar. They are soaked with preservative, but they still retain much of their original shape and

color. They are nothing like the other lips in my possession. The thin ones, the full ones, they rich lush ones. These are old-lady lips. Pursed, disapproving. She wasn't ever going to be kissed again anyway.



I stick a pair of needles through upper and lower crescents. Then I affix the lips to what's left of my own face, and the place where my own lips once sat. There is a jab of pain as the needles pierce my own flesh. There will be blood, too. Tears come to my eyes. That is okay. The lips stay in place.

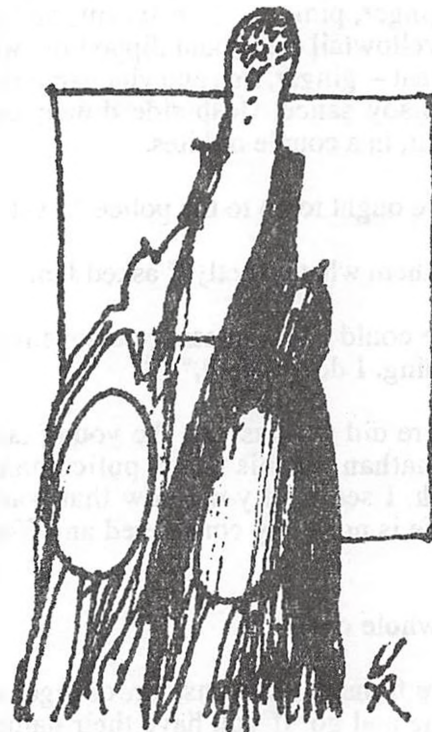
They are mine, now. So much diversity: so many possibilities. So many ways that this new pair of lips can play off all the different sets of noses I have to choose from. So many ways to become that toy that provided so many hours of enjoyment in my childhood. That little potato-shaped creature, with all his accessories. I loved him so much...the only thing I ever did love. Now I am him.

I reach into the jar and grab a nose. I would say pick a nose were it not for the inevitable false impressions. The one I choose is fat and pockmarked with ancient acne scars. It couldn't be less like the old lady's lips, which make it perfect. The toy always had a mismatched face, too. That was the whole point: the more mismatched the face, the more fun the toy. It was the way this worked when I was a kid and the way it continues to work now that I've become the toy myself.

I could play this game forever, if the parts don't spoil. But spoilage is the reason I have to keep obtaining new ones.

I look at myself in the mirror. Decide I need ears.

And pin them in place, right above the two pairs I'm already wearing.





Fiction

The Facts in the Case of the Departure of Miss Finch

by Neil Gaiman

To begin at the end: I arranged the thin slice of pickled ginger, pink and translucent, on top of the pale yellowtail flesh, and dipped the whole arrangement -- ginger, fish and vinegared rice - - into the soy sauce, flesh-side down; then I devoured it, in a couple of bites.

"I think we ought to go to the police," I said.

"And tell them what, exactly?" asked Jane.

"Well, we could file a missing persons report, or something. I don't know."

"And where did you last see the young lady?" asked Jonathan, in his most policemanlike tones. "Ah, I see. Did you know that wasting police time is normally considered an offence, sir?"

"But the whole circus..."

"These are transient persons, sir, of legal age. They come and go. If you have their names, I

suppose I can take a report..." I gloomily ate a salmon-skin roll. "Well, then," I said, "why don't we go to the papers?"

"Brilliant idea," said Jonathan, in the sort of tone of voice which indicates that the person talking doesn't think it's a brilliant idea at all.

"Jonathan's right," said Jane. "They won't listen to us."

"Why wouldn't they believe us? We're reliable. Honest citizens. All that."

"You're a fantasy writer," she said. "You make up stuff like this for a living. No-one's going to believe you."

"But you two saw it all as well. You'd back me up."

"Jonathan's got a new series on cult horror movies coming out in the autumn. They'll say he's just trying to get cheap publicity for the show. And I've got another book coming out. Same thing."

"So you're saying that we can't tell anyone?" I sipped my green tea.

"No," Jane said, reasonably, "we can tell anyone we want. It's making them believe us that's problematic. Or, if you ask me, impossible."

The pickled ginger was sharp on my tongue. "You may be right," I said. "And Miss Finch is probably much happier wherever she is right now than she would be here."

"But her name isn't Miss Finch," said Jane, "it's -- " and she said our former companion's real name.

"I know. But it's what I thought when I first saw her," I explained. "Like in one of those movies. You know. When they take off their glasses and put down their hair. 'Why, Miss Finch. You're beautiful.'"

"She certainly was that," said Jonathan, "in the end, anyway." And he shivered at the memory. There. So now you know: that's how it all ended, and how the three of us left it, several years ago. All that remains is the beginning, and

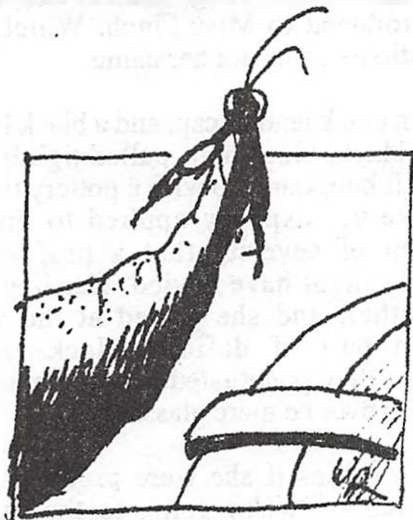
the details.

For the record, I don't expect you to believe any of this. Not really. I'm a liar by trade, after all; albeit, I like to think, an honest liar. If I belonged to a gentleman's club I'd recount it over a glass or two of port late in the evening as the fire burned low, but I am a member of no such club, and I'll write it better than ever I'd tell it. So here you will learn of Miss Finch (whose name, as you already know, was not Finch, nor anything like it, since I'm changing names here to disguise the guilty) and how it came about that she was unable to join us for sushi. Believe it or not, just as you wish. I am not even certain that I believe it anymore. It all seems such a long way away.

I could find a dozen beginnings. Perhaps it might be best to begin in a hotel room, in London, a few years ago. It was 11:00 am. The phone began to ring, which surprised me. I hurried over to answer it.

"Hello?" It was too early in the morning for anyone in America to be phoning me, and there was no-one in England who was meant to know that I was even in the country.

"Hi," said a familiar voice, adopting an American accent of monumentally unconvincing proportions. "This is Hiram P. Muzzledexter of Colossal Pictures. We're working on a film that's a remake of Raiders of the Lost Ark but instead of Nazis it has women with enormous knockers in it. We've heard that you were astonishingly well-supplied in the trouser department and might be willing to take on the part of our male lead, Minnesota Jones..."



"Jonathan?" I said. "How on earth did you find me here?"

"You knew it was me," he said, aggrieved, his voice losing all trace of the improbable accent and returning to his native London.

"Well, it sounded like you," I pointed out. "Anyway, you didn't answer my question. No-one's meant to know that I was here."

"I have my ways," he said, not very mysteriously. "Listen, if Jane and I were to offer to feed you sushi something I recall you eating in quantities that put me in mind of feeding time at London Zoo's Walrus House and if we offered to take you the theatre before we fed you, what would you say?"

"Not sure. I'd say 'Yes' I suppose. Or 'What's the catch?'. I might say that."

"Not exactly a catch," said Jonathan. "I wouldn't exactly call it a catch. Not a real catch. Not really."

"You're lying, aren't you?"

Somebody said something near the phone, and then Jonathan said "Hang on, Jane wants a word." Jane is Jonathan's wife.

"How are you?" she said.

"Fine, thanks."

"Look," she said, "You'd be doing us a tremendous favour not that we wouldn't love to see you, because we would, but you see, there's someone..."

"She's your friend," said Jonathan, in the background.

"She's not my friend. I hardly know her," she said, away from the phone, and then, to me, "Um, look, there's someone we're sort of lumbered with. She's not in the country for very long, and I wound up agreeing to entertain her and look after her tomorrow night. She's pretty frightful, actually. And Jonathan heard that you were in town from someone at your film company, and we thought you might be perfect to make it all less awful, so please say yes."

So I said yes.

In retrospect, I think the whole thing might have been the fault of the late Ian Fleming, creator of James Bond. I had read an article the previous month, in which Ian Fleming had advised any would-be writer who had a book to get done that wasn't getting written to go to a hotel to write it. I had, not a novel, but a film script that wasn't getting written; so I bought a plane ticket to London, promised the film company that they'd have a finished script in three weeks' time, and took a room in an eccentric hotel in Little Venice.

I told no-one in England that I was there. Had people known, my days and nights would have been spent seeing them, not staring at a computer screen and, sometimes, writing.

Truth to tell, I was bored half out of my mind, and ready to welcome any interruption.

Early the next evening I arrived at Jonathan and Jane's house, which was more or less in Hampstead. There was a small green sports car parked outside. Up the stairs, and I knocked at the door. Jonathan answered it; he wore an impressive suit. His light-brown hair was longer than I remembered it from the last time I had seen him, in life or on television.

"Hello," said Jonathan. "The show we were going to take you to has been canceled. But we can go to something else, if that's okay with you."

I was about to point out that I didn't know what we were originally going to see, so a change of plans would make no difference to me, but Jonathan was already leading me into the living room, establishing that I wanted fizzy water to drink, assuring me that we'd still be eating sushi and that Jane would be coming downstairs as soon as she had put the children to bed.

They had just redecorated the living room, in a style Jonathan described as Moorish brothel. "It didn't set out to be a Moorish Brothel," he explained. "Or any kind of a brothel really. It was just where we ended up. The brothel look."

"Has he told you all about Miss Finch?" asked Jane. Her hair had been red the last time I had

seen her. Now it was dark brown; and she curved like a Raymond Chandler simile.

"Who?"

"We were talking about Ditko's inking style," apologised Jonathan. "And the Neal Adams issues of Jerry Lewis."

"But she'll be here any moment. And he has to know about her before she gets here."

Jane is, by profession, a journalist, but had become a best-selling author almost by accident. She had written a companion volume to accompany a television series about two paranormal investigators, which had risen to the top of the bestseller lists and stayed there.

Jonathan had originally become famous hosting an evening talk show, and had since parlayed his gonzo charm into a variety of fields. He's the same person whether the camera is on or off, which is not always true of television folk.

"It's a kind of family obligation," Jane explained. "Well, not exactly family."

"She's Jane's friend," said her husband, cheerfully.

"She is not my friend. But I couldn't exactly say no to them, could I? And she's only in the country for a couple of days."

And who Jane could not say no to, and what the obligation was, I never was to learn, for at the moment the doorbell rang, and I found myself being introduced to Miss Finch. Which, as I have mentioned, was not her name.

She wore a black leather cap, and a black leather coat, and black, black hair, pulled tightly back into a small bun, done up with a pottery tie. She wore make-up, expertly applied to give an impression of severity that a professional dominatrix might have envied. Her lips were tight together, and she glared at the world through a pair of definite black-rimmed spectacles - they punctuated her face much too definitely to ever be mere glasses.

"So," she said, as if she were pronouncing a death sentence, "we're going to the theatre, then."

"Well, yes and no," said Jonathan. "I mean, yes, we are still going out, but we're not going to be able to see The Romans in Britain."

"Good," said Miss Finch. "In poor taste anyway. Why anyone would have thought that nonsense would make a musical I do not know."

"So we're going to a circus," said Jane, reassuringly. "And then we're going to eat sushi."

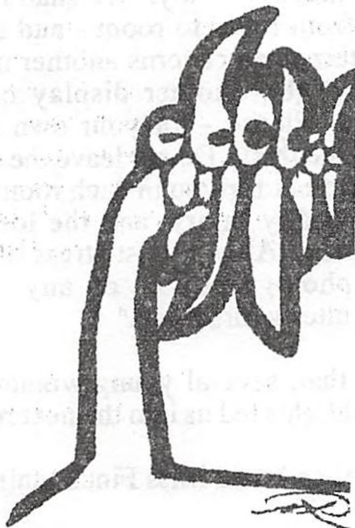
Miss Finch's lips tightened. "I do not approve of circuses," she said.

"There aren't any animals in this circus," said Jane.

"Good," said Miss Finch, and she sniffed. I was beginning to understand why Jane and Jonathan had wanted me along. The rain was pattering down as we left the house, and the street was dark. We squeezed ourselves into the sports car and headed out into London. Miss Finch and I were in the back seat of the car, pressed uncomfortably close together. Jane told Miss Finch that I was a writer, and told me that Miss Finch was a biologist.

"Biogeologist actually," Miss Finch corrected her. "Were you serious about eating sushi, Jonathan?"

"Er, yes. Why? Don't you like sushi?"



"Oh, I'll eat my food cooked," she said, and began to list for us all the various flukes, worms and parasites that lurk in the flesh of fish and which are only killed by cooking. She told us of their life cycles while the rain pelted down, slicking night-time London into garish neon colours. Jane shot me a sympathetic glance from the passenger seat, then she and Jonathan went back to scrutinising a handwritten set of directions to wherever we were going. We crossed the Thames at London Bridge while Miss Finch lectured us about blindness, madness and liver failure; and she was just elaborating on the symptoms of elephantiasis as proudly as if she had invented them herself, when we pulled up in a small back street in the neighbourhood of Southwark Cathedral.

"So where's the circus?" I asked.

"Somewhere around here," said Jonathan. "They contacted us about being on the Christmas special. I tried to pay for tonight's show, but they insisted on comping us in."

"I'm sure it will be fun," said Jane, hopefully.

Miss Finch sniffed.

A fat, bald man, dressed as a monk, ran down the pavement toward us. "There you are!" he said. "I've been keeping an eye out for you. You're late. It'll be starting in a moment." He turned around and scampered back the way he had come, and we followed him. The rain splashed on his bald head and ran down his face, turning his Fester Addams make-up into streaks of white and brown. He pushed open a door in the side of a wall.

"In here."

We went in. There were about fifty people in there already, dripping and steaming, while a tall woman in bad vampire make-up holding a flashlight walked around checking tickets, tearing off stubs, selling tickets to anyone who didn't have one. A small, stocky woman immediately in front of us shook the rain from her umbrella and glowered about her fiercely. "This'd better be gud," she told the young man with her - her son, I suppose. She paid for tickets for both of them.

The vampire woman reached us, recognised Jonathan and said "Is this your party? Four people? Yes? You're on the guest list." which provoked another suspicious stare from the stocky woman.

A recording of a clock ticking began to play. A clock struck twelve (it was barely eight by my watch), and the wooden double-doors at the far end of the room creaked open. "Enter... of your own free will!" boomed a voice, and it laughed maniacally. We walked through the door into darkness.

It smelled of wet bricks and of decay. I knew then where we were: there are networks of old cellars that run beneath some of the overground train tracks vast, empty, linked rooms of various sizes and shapes. Some of them are used for storage by wine merchants and used-car sellers; some are squatted in, until the lack of light and facilities drives the squatters back into the daylight; most of them stand empty, waiting for the inevitable arrival of the wrecking ball and the open air and the time when all their secrets and mysteries will be no more.

A train rattled by above us.

We shuffled forward, led by Uncle Fester and the Vampire woman, into a sort of a holding pen where we stood and waited.

"I hope we're going to be able to sit down after this," said Miss Finch.

When we were all settled the flashlights went out, and the spotlights went on.



The people came out. Some of them rode motorbikes and dune buggies. They ran and they laughed and they swung and they cackled. Whoever had dressed them had been reading too many comics, I thought, or watched Mad Max too many times. There were punks and nuns and vampires and monsters and strippers and the living dead.

They danced and capered around us while the Ringmaster - identifiable by his top hat -- sang Alice Cooper's song 'Welcome to My Nightmare', and sang it very badly.

"I know Alice Cooper," I muttered to myself, misquoting something half-remembered, "And you, sir, are no Alice Cooper."

"It's pretty naff," agreed Jonathan.

Jane shushed us. As the last notes faded away the Ringmaster was left alone in the spotlight. He walked around our enclosure while he talked.

"Welcome, welcome, one and all, to the Theatre of Night's Dreaming," he said.

"Fan of yours," whispered Jonathan.

"I think it's a Rocky Horror Show line," I whispered back.

"Tonight you will all be witnesses to monsters undreamed-of, freaks and creatures of the night, to displays of ability to make you shriek with fear - and laugh with joy. We shall travel," he told us, "from room to room - and in each of these subterranean caverns another nightmare, another delight, another display of wonder await you! Please - for your own safety - I must reiterate this! - Do not leave the spectating area marked out for you in each room on pain of doom, bodily injury, and the loss of your immortal soul! Also, I must stress that the use of flash photography or of any recording devices is utterly forbidden."

And with that, several young women holding pencil flashlights led us into the next room.

"No seats then," said Miss Finch, unimpressed.

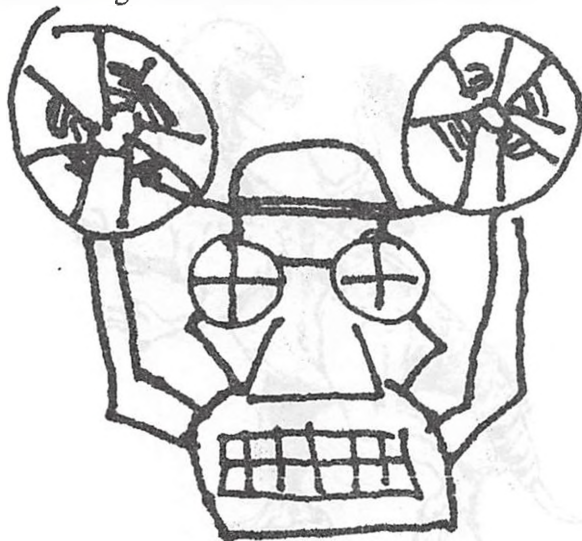
THE FIRST ROOM

In the first room a smiling blonde woman wearing a spangled bikini, with needle-tracks down her arms, was chained by a hunchback and Uncle Fester to a large wheel.

The wheel spun slowly around, and a fat man in a red Cardinal's costume threw knives at the woman, outlining her body. Then the hunchback blindfolded the cardinal, who threw the last three knives straight and true to outline the woman's head. He removed his blindfold. The woman was untied and lifted down from the wheel. They took a bow. We clapped.

Then the cardinal took a trick knife from his belt and pretended to cut the woman's throat with it. Blood spilled down from the knife-blade. A few members of the audience gasped, and one excitable girl gave a small scream, while her friends giggled.

The cardinal and the spangled woman took their final bow. The lights went down. We followed the flashlights down a brick-lined corridor.



THE SECOND ROOM

The smell of damp was worse in here it smelled like a cellar, musty and forgotten. I could hear somewhere the drip of rain. The Ringmaster introduced The Creature "Stitched together in the laboratories of the night, the Creature is capable of astonishing feats of strength". The Frankenstein's monster make-up was less than convincing, but The Creature lifted a stone block with fat Uncle Fester sitting on it, and he

held back the dune buggy (driven by the vampire woman) at full throttle. For his *piece de resistance* he blew up a hot water bottle, then popped it.

"Roll on the sushi," I muttered to Jonathan.

Miss Finch pointed out, quietly, that in addition to the danger of parasites, it was also the case that Bluefin Tuna, swordfish and Chilean Seabass were all being overfished and could soon be rendered extinct, since they were not reproducing fast enough to catch up.

THE THIRD ROOM

went up for a long way into the darkness. The original ceiling had been removed at some time in the past, and the new ceiling was the roof of the empty warehouse far above us. The room buzzed at the corners of vision with the blue-purple of ultraviolet light. Teeth and shirts and flecks of lint began to glow in the darkness. A low, throbbing music began. We looked up to see, high above us, a skeleton, an alien, a werewolf and an angel. Their costumes fluoresced in the UV, and they glowed like old dreams high above us, on trapezes. They swung back and forth, in time with the music, and then, as one, they let go and tumbled down toward us.

We gasped, but before they reached us they bounced on the air, and rose up again, like yo-yos, and clambered back on their trapezes. We realised that they were attached to the roof by rubber cords, invisible in the darkness, and they bounced and dove and swam through the air above us while we clapped and gasped and watched them in happy silence.

THE FOURTH ROOM

was little more than a corridor: the ceiling was low, and the Ringmaster strutted into the audience and picked two people out of the crowd the stocky woman, and a tall black man wearing a sheepskin coat and tan gloves, pulled them up in front of us. He announced that he would be demonstrating his hypnotic powers. He made a couple of passes in the air, and rejected the stocky woman. Then he asked the man to step up onto a box.

"It's a set-up," muttered Jane. "He's a plant."

A guillotine was wheeled on. The ringmaster cut a watermelon in half, to demonstrate how sharp the blade was. Then he made the man put his hand under the guillotine, and dropped the blade. The gloved hand dropped into the basket, and blood spurting from the open cuff.

Miss Finch squeaked.

Then the man picked his hand out of the basket and chased the Ringmaster around us, while the Benny Hill Show music played.

"Artificial hand," said Jonathan.

"I saw it coming," said Jane.

Miss Finch blew her nose into a tissue. "I think it's all in very questionable taste," she said. Then they led us to

THE FIFTH ROOM

and all the lights went on. There was a makeshift wooden table along one wall, with a young bald man selling beer and orange juice and bottles of water, and signs showed the way to the toilets in the room next door. Jane went to get the drinks, and Jonathan went to use the toilets, which left me to make awkward conversation with Miss Finch.

"So," I said, "I understand you've not been back in England long."

"I've been in Komodo," she told me. "Studying the dragons. Do you know why they grew so big?"

"Er..."

"They adapted to prey upon the pygmy elephants."

"There were pygmy elephants?" I was interested. This was much more fun than being lectured on sushi flukes.

"Oh yes. It's basic island biogeology animals will naturally tend toward either gigantism or pygmyism. There are equations, you see..." As

Miss Finch talked her face became more animated, and I found myself warming to her as she explained why and how some animals grew while others shrank.

Jane brought us our drinks; Jonathan came back from the toilet, cheered and bemused by having been asked to sign an autograph while he was pissing.

"Tell me," said Jane, "I've been reading a lot of cryptozoological journals for the next of the Guides to the Unexplained I'm doing. As a biologist - "

"Biogeologist," interjected Miss Finch.

"Yes. What do you think the chances are of prehistoric animals being alive today, in secret, unknown to science?"

"It's very unlikely," said Miss Finch, as if she were telling us off. "There is, at any rate, no 'lost world' off on some island, filled with mammoths and smilodons and aepyornis..."



"Sounds a bit rude," said Jonathan. "A what?"

"Aepyornis. A giant flightless prehistoric bird," said Jane.

"I knew that really," he told her.

"Although of course, they're not prehistoric," said Miss Finch. "The last Aepyornises were killed off by Portuguese sailors on Madagascar about 300 years ago. And there are fairly reliable accounts of a pygmy mammoth being

presented at the Russian court in the sixteenth century, and a band of something which from the descriptions we have were almost definitely some kind of sabre-tooth - the Smilodons - were brought in from North Africa by Vespasian to die in the circus. So these things aren't all prehistoric. Often, they're historic."

"I wonder what the point of the sabre-teeth would be," I said. "You'd think they'd get in the way."

"Nonsense," said Mss Finch. "Smilodon was a most efficient hunter. Must have been - the sabre-teeth are repeated a number of times in the fossil record. I wish with all my heart that there were some left today. But there aren't. We know the world too well."

"It's a big place," said Jane, doubtfully, and then the lights were flickered on and off, and a ghastly, disembodied voice told us to walk into the next room, that the latter half of the show was not for the faint of heart, and that later tonight, for one night only, the Circus of Night's Dreaming would be proud to present The Cabinet of Wishes Fulfill'd.

We threw away our plastic glasses, and we shuffled into

THE SIXTH ROOM

"Presenting," announced the Ringmaster. "The Painmaker!"

The spotlight swung up to reveal an abnormally thin young man in bathing trunks, hanging from hooks through his nipples. Two of the punk girls helped him down to the ground, and handed him his props. He hammered a six-inch nail into his nose, lifted weights with a piercing through his tongue, put several ferrets into his bathing trunks, and, for his final trick, allowed the taller of the punk girls to use his stomach as a dartboard for accurately flung hypodermic needles.

"Wasn't he on the show, years ago?" asked Jane.

"Yeah," said Jonathan. "Really nice guy. He lit a firework held in his teeth."

"I thought you said there were no animals," said Miss Finch. "How do you think those poor ferrets feel about being stuffed into that young man's nether regions?"

"I suppose it depends mostly on whether they're boy ferrets or girl ferrets," said Jonathan, cheerfully.

THE SEVENTH ROOM

contained a rock and roll comedy act, with some clumsy slapstick. A nun's breasts were revealed, and the hunchback lost his trousers.

THE EIGHTH ROOM

was dark. We waited in the darkness for something to happen. I wanted to sit down. My legs ached, I was tired and cold and I'd had enough.

Then someone started to shine a light at us. We blinked and squinted and covered our eyes.

"Tonight," an odd voice said, cracked and dusty. Not the ringmaster, I was sure of that. "Tonight, one of you shall get a wish. One of you will gain all that you desire, in the Cabinet of Wishes Fulfill'd. Who shall it be?"



"Ooh. At a guess, another plant in the audience," I whispered, remembering the one-handed man in the fourth room.

"Shush," said Jane.

"Who will it be? You sir? You madam?" A figure came out of the darkness and shambled towards us. It was hard to see him properly, for he held a portable spotlight. I wondered if he were wearing some kind of ape costume, for his outline seemed inhuman, and he moved as gorillas move. Perhaps it was the man who played 'The Creature'. "Who shall it be, eh?" We squinted at him, edged out of his way.

And then he pounced. "Aha! I think we have our volunteer," he said, leaping over the rope-barrier that separated the audience from the show area around us. Then he grabbed Miss Finch by the hand.

"I really don't think so," said Miss Finch, but she was being dragged away from us, too nervous, too polite, fundamentally too English to make a scene. She was pulled into the darkness, and she was gone to us. Jonathan swore. "I don't think she's going to let us forget this in a hurry," he said.

The lights went on. A man dressed as a giant fish then proceeded to ride a motorbike around the room several times. Then he stood up on the seat as it went around. Then he sat down and drove the bike up and down the walls of the room, and then he hit a brick and skidded and fell over, and the bike landed on top of him.

The hunchback and the topless nun ran on and pulled the bike off the man in the fish-suit and hauled him away.

"I just broke my sodding leg," he was saying, in a dull, numb voice. "It's sodding broken. My sodding leg," as they carried him out.

"Do you think that was meant to happen," asked a girl in the crowd near to us.

"No," said the man beside her.

Slightly shaken, Uncle Fester and the vampire woman ushered us forward, into



THE NINTH ROOM

where Miss Finch awaited us.

It was a huge room. I knew that, even in the thick darkness. Perhaps the dark intensifies the other senses; perhaps it's simply that we are always processing more information than we imagine. Echoes of our shuffling and coughing came back to us from walls hundreds of feet away.

And then I became convinced, with a certainty bordering upon madness, that there were great beasts in the darkness, and that they were watching us hungrily.

Slowly the lights came on, and we saw Miss Finch. I wonder to this day where they got the costume.

Her black hair was down. The spectacles were gone. The costume, what little there was of it, fitted her perfectly. She held a spear, and she stared at us without emotion. Then the great cats padded into the light next to her. One of them threw its head back and roared.

Someone began to wail. I could smell the sharp animal stench of urine.

The animals were the size of tigers, but unstriped; they were the colour of a sandy beach at evening. Their eyes were topaz, and their breath smelled of fresh meat and of blood.

I stared at their jaws: the sabre-teeth were indeed teeth, not tusks: huge, overgrown fangs, made for rending, for tearing, for ripping meat from the bone.

The great cats began to pad around us, circling, slowly. We huddled together, closing ranks, each of us remembering in our guts what it was like in the old times, when we hid in our caves when the night came and the beasts went on the prowl; remembering when we were prey.

The smilodons, if that was what they were, seemed uneasy, wary. Their tails switched whiplike from side to side, impatiently. Miss Finch said nothing. She just stared at her animals.

Then the stocky woman raised her umbrella and waved it at one of the great cats. "Keep back, you ugly brute," she told it.

It growled at her, and tensed back, like a cat about to spring.

The stocky woman went pale, but she kept her umbrella pointed out like a sword. She made no move to run, in the torchlit darkness beneath the city.

And then it sprang, batting her to the ground with one huge velvet paw. It stood over her, triumphantly, and it roared so deeply that I could feel it in the pit of my stomach. The stocky woman seemed to have passed out, which was, I felt, a mercy: with luck, she would not know when the blade-like fangs tore at her old flesh like twin daggers.



I looked around for some way out, but the other tiger was prowling around us, keeping us herded within the rope enclosure, like frightened sheep.

I could hear Jonathan muttering the same three dirty words, over and over and over. "We're going to die, aren't we?" I heard myself say.

"I think so," said Jane.

Then Miss Finch pushed her way through the rope barrier, and she took the great cat by the scruff of its neck and pulled it back. It resisted, and she thwacked it on the nose with the end of her spear. Its tail went down between its legs, and it backed away from the fallen woman, cowed and obedient.

There was no blood, that I could see, and I hoped that she was only unconscious.

In the back of the cellar room light was slowly coming up. It seemed as if dawn were breaking. I could see a jungle mist wreathing about huge ferns and hostas; and I could hear, as if from a great way off, the chirp of crickets and the call of strange birds awaking to greet the new day. And part of me - -the writer part of me, the bit that has noted the particular way the light hit the broken glass in the puddle of blood even as I staggered out from a car crash, and has observed in exquisite detail the way that my heart was broken, or did not break, in moments of real, profound, personal tragedy - it was that part of me that thought, "You could get that effect with a smoke machine, some plants and a tape track. You'd need a really good lighting guy of course."

Miss Finch scratched her left breast, unselfconsciously, then she turned her back on us and walked toward the dawn and the jungle underneath the world, flanked by two padding sabre-toothed tigers.

A bird screeched and chattered.

Then the dawn light faded back into darkness, and the mists shifted, and the woman and the animals were gone.

The stocky woman's son helped her to her feet. She opened her eyes. She looked shocked but unhurt. And when we knew that she was not

hurt, for she picked up her umbrella, and leaned on it, and glared at us all, why then we began to applaud.

No-one came to get us. I could not see Uncle Fester or the vampire woman anywhere. So unescorted we all walked on into

THE TENTH ROOM

It was all set up for what would obviously have been the grand finale. There were even plastic seats arranged, for us to watch the show. We sat down on the seats and we waited, but nobody from the circus came on, and, it became apparent to us all after some time, no-one was going to come.

People began to shuffle into the next room. I heard a door open, and the noise of traffic and the rain.

I looked at Jane and Jonathan, and we got up and walked out. In the last room was an unmanned table upon which were laid out souvenirs of the circus: posters and CDs and badges, and an open cash-box. Sodium yellow light spilled in from the street outside, through an open door, and the wind gusted at the unsold posters, flapping the corners up and down impatiently.

"Should we wait for her?" one of us said, and I wish I could say that it was me. But the others shook their heads, and we walked out into the rain, which had by now subsided to a low and gusty drizzle.

After a short walk down narrow roads, in the rain and the wind, we found our way to the car. I stood on the pavement, waiting the back door to be unlocked to let me in, and over the rain and the noise of the city I thought I heard a tiger, somewhere close by, for there was a low roar that made the whole world shake. But perhaps it was only the passage of a train.



Fiction

The Tale of the Horn Gate

by Pete Rawlik

Three times did the dreamer reach the gate of common dreams, and three times did the guards refuse him passage. Three times did the dreamer petition for entrance and three times did the watchers deny his plea. Now the common gate was fashioned from the tusks of a hungry god who desired to feast on dreams themselves. The gate is all that remains of this devourer, and not even the oldest of dreams recall his name. Some say that even Death has forgotten the tale and that only the Dream Lord himself may remember, and then only rarely.

Few scholars of the true dreaming have resisted the temptation to speculate on the origin and ancestry of this forgotten oneirovore. Many are the Nightmares that have commented on the irony of dreams now passing unmolested through this forgotten beast's maw.

Now, as the guards of the common gate are happy to tell, few mortals are allowed through the ivory gate without the Dream Lord's pass. Although Poe was permitted seven unchallenged visits to the Green and one to the Library. There is also, the guards will under protest reveal, another gate to the true dreaming. This second gate is made from the horns of a minor godling, who challenged the Dream Lord for control of the distant Skerries, not out of recklessness but out of true need. This gate of horn is the gate of true

dreams, of higher dreams. Like the ivory gate, few mortals have pass to travel through the horn gate - indeed of those mortals who have petitioned for passage, only five were granted entrance. The Librarian reports however, that not one, but three mortals, Tolkein, Lovecraft and Smith, gained access during the Dream Lord's brief and unexpected absence. Yet as they took, nor left, anything of value, the Master is fond to overlook these intrusions. Of the other five who gained rightful entrance to the horn gate; one dreamed of an ancient, glorious kingdom hidden with in a closet; two were brothers with dreams of enchanted, sleeping princesses; one was a bride whose dreams kept Lady Death at bay; and one was a child who dreamed an empire out of the desert sand. More recently it is said that a nightmare, known to some simply as Shades, had smuggled a particular Mr. Barker through the gate to visit the masters of secrets and mysteries. This of course is only a rumor and is alternatively and alternately denied and supported by the two sons of Adam.



So it came to pass that the dreamer forsook the ivory gate for the horn gate, and did call upon the guard to let him pass.

The guard, a brutish ogre of a dream, who was once called Argus, knew full well the law of the gates, and challenged the dreamer "By what right do you petition for passage through the gate of horn?"

And the dreamer replied " I have descended the thousand steps and spoken to the Priest Atal. I have climbed the Peak of Ngaranek and watched the Night Gaunts gibber without mouths or faces."

Argus thought for a moment, and then thought again, and asked "By what right do you ask entry to the true dreaming?"

To which the dreamer said "I have seen Celephais, Ulthar, Mirkwood, the Quadling Cities, and all the Land. I have walked the roads of Perelandra, Narnia, Elysia and Tharn. I have slept in the Inns of Knunseitch and browsed the shops of tainted Innsmouth."

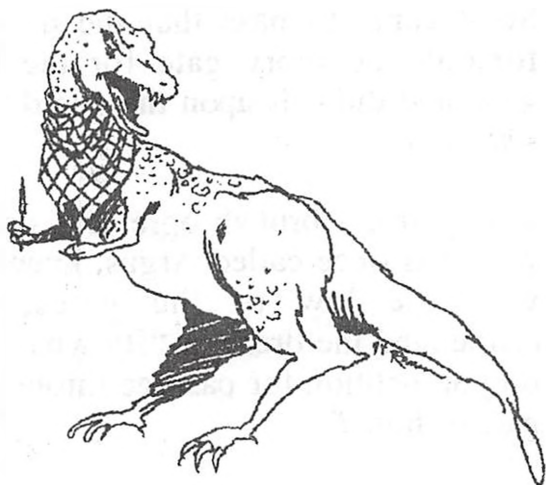
To which Argus asked "You don't have permission do you?"

"Umm....no" said the dreamer meekly.

"Well listen buddy. If you've gotten this far you know the rules as well as I. No pass, no entry. That's the way things are."

"Where can I find this pass," pleaded the dreamer.

(cont'd on page 26)



Other Tropicon Guests

LYNN ABBEY

molded an entire decade of fantasy with her work on Thieve's World. Her first novel *Daughter of the Bright Moon* is a classic of the genre. More recently, her work for TSR in both the *DarkSun* and *Forgotten Realms* settings has thrilled fans. Her latest work *Siege of Shadows*, has generated equal excitement. We have also had the pleasure of hosting her as our Guest of Honor during Tropicon VIII!

ADAM-TROY CASTRO

has been nominated for a Hugo, a Nebula, and a Stoker. His short story collection, *Lost in Booth Nine*, is a sordid descent into the world of adult entertainment. When not writing (and tormenting other writers with his success), Adam-Troy Castro is held hostage by two neurotic cats and a lovecraftian telemarketing firm somewhere in Boca Raton.

HAL CLEMENT

was born Harry Clement Stubbs and is the author of more than ten novels and two short story collections. Best known for his classic *Mission of Gravity*, Hal is also a master of the science behind the fiction and has thrilled fans and pros alike with his lectures on bizarre worlds and the life that could exist there. We have had the distinct pleasure of hosting him as our Tropicon IX Guest of Honor.

CHARLES FONTENAY

is the author of *The Drowned World* and *Rebels of the Red Planet*. His ongoing *Kipton* adventure series for young readers is firmly rooted in the Heinlein tradition. Born in Brazil and raised in Tennessee, Charles Fontenay began working for the press in 1936 and has worked for the *Nashville Tennessean* and the Associated Press. He now resides in West Florida. Additionally, he has been a Guest of Honor during a past Travelling Fete.

JOSEPH GREEN

is a rare bird indeed! Equally comfortable writing technical documents for NASA as he is writing fiction, Joseph Green has over a thirty short story publications and five novels to his credit. Although best known for his 1972 novel *Conscience Interplanetary*, his first novel, *The Loafers of Refuge* (1965) is a fabulous cautionary tale of space exploration and the wonders that await us. And, if that were not enough, he has also survived to earn the distinction as a past Guest of Honor during a Travelling Fete!

CAITLÍN R. KIERNAN

has published her gothic and gothicnoir short fiction in numerous anthologies, including *The Sandman: Book of Dreams*, *Love in Vein II*, *Lethal Kisses*, *Dark of the Night*, *Darkside: Horror for the Next Millenium*, *Noirotica 2*, *Brothers of the Night*, and *Dark Terrors 2 and 3*. Her 1997 short story "Estate" was included in *The Year's Best Fantasy and Horror #11*. Caitlín's first novel, *Silk*, was released by Roc in 1998. She is currently writing *The Dreaming* for DC Comics as well as developing other projects for DC's Vertigo line. Her first short story collection, *Tales of Pain and Wonder*, will be published by Gauntlet Press.

HOLLY LISLE

is the author of *Fire in the Mist* which won her the coveted Compton Crook Award. A collaborator with Mercedes Lackey, Marion Zimmer Bradley, and S.M. Stirling, Holly Lisle has published more than a dozen novels including *Minerva Wakes* and *Sympathy for the Devil*. Her most recent work is *The Diplomacy of Wolves*. She lives in the wilds of west Broward County.

MIKE RESNICK

has won both Hugos and Nebulas. He will admit to being the author of dozens of novels including *Santiago*, *Paradise*, *Purgatory*, *Inferno*, and *Second Contact*. If pressed he will discuss the unseemly death of the author Michael Resnick in a bar fight in Mexico. Mike Resnick is also the editor of the highly successful *Alternate . . .* series of anthologies. When not traveling in

Africa, he can be found on "safari" in Cincinnati and Orlando. Also, he has secured his place in Tropicon history by serving as Toastmaster for Tropicon XIV.

LAURIE S. SUTTON

is a former editor at DC Comics, Marvel/Epic Comics, Tekno Comics, and Donning/Starblaze. She has written for a number of comics including Marvel's *Star Trek: Voyager*, Malibu's *Star Trek: Deep Space Nine*, and *Witch Hunter*.



INHOUSE

is known for their unusually powerful and personal live shows. They have opened for Better Than Ezra, Wide Spread Panic, Sister Hazel, Matchbox 20, Duncan Shiek, K's Choice, Moist, and The Cowboy Junkies, as well as joining the 1998 Lilith Fair. INHOUSE has also earned cross-spectrum fans by opening for more diverse musicians such as Pat Benatar, Ziggy Marley, Fleetwood Mac, Peter Dinklage, The Neville Brothers and Zach Wilde, as well as joining the 1997 Van's Warped Tour. INHOUSE's latest endeavor is their third CD *Waking Juliet*. This new album, filled with energy and emotion provides a strong sense of where this band has come from and where it is going.

(cont'd from page 23)

"Friend if I told you that I wouldn't be much of a guard would I?" the guard growled.

"No, I suppose not" said the dreamer, "could you give me a clue"

"Hrumph. Tell you what, you come by every so often. Wait, watch, be patient. You might learn something," suggested the ogre.

There after the dreamer became a regular visitor to the horn gate. Years went by and the dreamer and the guardian grew to be fast friends. Argus grew quite fond of the little dreamer who, as far as Argus could tell, spent every sleeping hour listening to the tales Argus would tell of the old guardians of the gates of horns. One day, many years after their first encounter, on a particularly slow day, the dreamer posed a perplexing question, "Where did the old guardians go? Do dreams die?"

"Not as such," replied Argus. "Most of the time, dreams just are. Still there comes a time when very old dreams need rest. Some dreams grow tired or restless or forgetful. They need to grow, to change, to do - to be something else."

"Will that happen to you?"

"Someday, friend someday."

Still more years passed and there came the day that the dreamer came to the gate of horn to find Argus no longer at

his post and dreams cavorting freely through the gates. "What has happened to Argus?" cried out the dreamer.

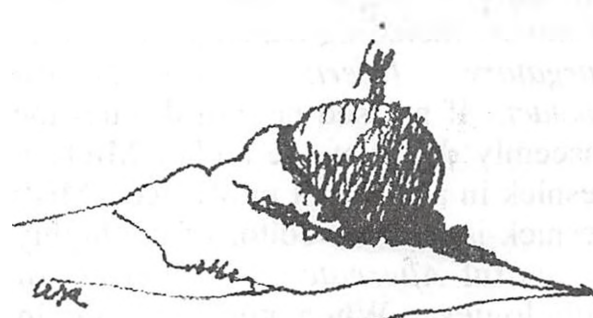
And a mischievous dream called out to him, "Argus has passed beyond the gate of horn! He was old and tired. His time had come. No one guards the gate now. All are free to come and go as they please."

The dreamer's eyes opened bright at the prospects before him. There beyond the gate was the true dreaming, the Land of Nod, the Kingdom of Morpheus. The gate was open, unguarded. His path was clear.

These days when dreamers visit the gate of horn, the guardian greets them with warm smiles and tales of all the guardians past. He tells tales of Brontes, and Throm, and the twins Hepsis and Bahran. Mostly though he tells the tales of Argus and how he befriended a dreamer of great renown and taught him the meaning of the Dream Lord's pass.

Always the question the dreamers ask is, "When will you pass through?"

The guardian, who still remembers days long past, smiles fondly, and says "Someday friend, someday."





Tropicon XVII **Programming**

[still subject to possible change. Please check pocket program for most accurate schedule-SAR]

FRIDAY

"An Introduction to Neverwhere with Neil Gaiman"

1:45 p.m. - 2:45 p.m.
Grand Salon II

Yes, we're hoping Neil can cram the entire history of NEVERWHERE's development into twenty-nine minutes...right before we show the first thirty minute segment. (the other segments to be shown in the Video Room, please check that schedule).

"The Year In Review" with George Peterson, Edie Stern (mod), Bill Wilson and others

3:00 p.m. - 4:00 p.m.
Grand Salon II

Audience participation is a must as our panel leads off a spirited discussion on the good and bad of the past year...and possibly predict some Hugo nominees!

"Shared Worlds" with Lynn Abbey, Neil Gaiman, Caitlín R. Kiernan, Mike Resnick (mod), Charles Vess

4:15 p.m. - 5:15 p.m.
Grand Salon II

Our panel discusses the pros and cons of having to share and interact creatively in a created "universe".

Opening Ceremonies with everyone

5:30 p.m. - 6:00 p.m.
Grand Salon II

Join us for the official opening of this year's convention!

DINNER BREAK

6:00 p.m. - 8:15 p.m.

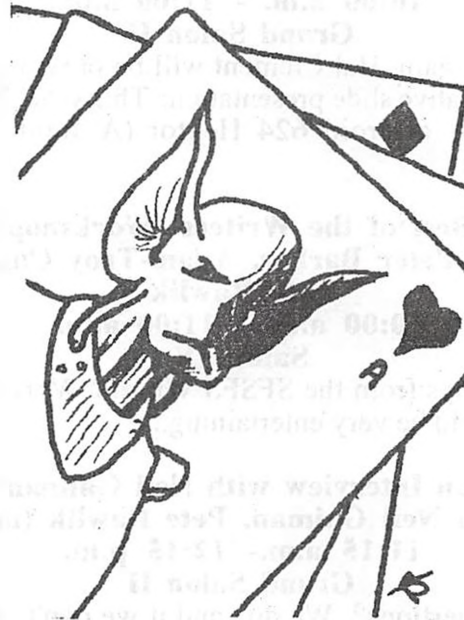
VIP PARTY/GOBLIN MARKET

with everyone

8:30 p.m. - 9:45 p.m.

Atrium area

There will be chaotic fun for all at the GOBLIN MARKET! Add to your "cup o' loot" through games of skill and chance before trying to bargain with the goblins for a variety of items ranging from tubes of "fairy poop" to hardcover books to bags of shells and a plethora of stuff in-between. Our guests will be available for signatures at this time.



Neil Gaiman and Charles Vess signing 8:45 p.m. - 9:45 p.m.

Atrium area

This will be limited to one hour. We request that everyone observe the 3 item limit per guest, so that everyone will have an opportunity.

INHOUSE Concert!
10:00 p.m. - 1:00 a.m.
Grand Salon II

Local band favorites, INHOUSE will be playing their original songs off their three albums, and a few "cover" songs from their favorite artists. They are wonderful musicians who had the distinction of participating in Lilith Fair this past July. We ask that everyone planning to attend the concert pick up at free ticket at registration desk. This will enable the concomm staff to ensure that we do not go over the room's meeting capacity of 130 warm bodies. Only con participants will be permitted to attend the concert and you must have both badge and ticket at the door to enter.

SATURDAY

"The World with Three North Poles"
with Hal Clement
10:00 a.m. - 11:00 a.m.
Grand Salon II

Once again, Hal Clement will be providing an informative slide presentation. This year's topic will be asteroid 624 Hektor (A Jupiter L4 Trojan).

"Best of the Writers' Workshop"
with Peter Barker, Adam-Troy Castro,
Pete Rawlik
10:00 a.m. - 11:00 a.m.
Salon IV

Readings from the SFSFS Writers' Workshop. It should be very entertaining...

"An Interview with Neil Gaiman"
with Neil Gaiman, Pete Rawlik (mod)
11:15 a.m. - 12:15 p.m.
Grand Salon II

Got questions? We do...and if we don't ask it, you can!

**"Why Recombinant DNA Technology,
Airplanes and Rollerskates have a place
in the High Fantasy Novel"**
**with Lynn Abbey, Holly Lisle (mod),
Becky Peters**
11:15 a.m. - 12:15 a.m.
Salon IV

While the title is somewhat self-explanatory, our moderator (the author of the panel title) will lead us on a discussion on why everything is possible in fantasy.

"Favorite Fantasy Illustrators"
with Charles Vess
12:30 p.m. - 1:30 p.m.
Grand Salon II

An opportunity for use to enjoy a slide show of Fantasy Illustrators, both historical and contemporary, presented by our own Guest of Honor!

"Science Fiction Retrospective"
**with Hal Clement, Charles Fontenay,
Joseph Green (mod), Holly Lisle, Mike
Resnick**
12:30 p.m. - 1:30 p.m.
Salon IV

How does modern science fiction compare to early science fiction of the 30's, 40's, 50's, and 60's.

Trivia Contest
with Donna Penz and Joe Siclari
1:45 p.m. - 2:45 p.m.
Grand Salon II

Yes, our Trivia Contest Winner from last year, Donna Penz, will be returning to ask the tough questions, and merrily fling wooden nickels (after 30 seconds of training from the master, Joe Siclari) and those of you fortunate enough to yell the correct answer out in time. Not for the faint at heart...or those with slow reflex action!

Author Readings
**with Lynn Abbey and Caitlín R.
Kiernan**
1:45 p.m. - 2:45 p.m.
Salon IV

Ms. Abbey and Ms. Kiernan will be available in the Atrium area immediately after their readings for autographs.

Neil Gaiman and Charles Vess Signing
1:45 p.m. - 2:45 p.m.
Atrium area

Due to the CBLDF Auction immediately following, this will be limited to one hour. We request that everyone observe the 3 item limit per guest, so that everyone will have an opportunity.

**Comic Book Legal Defense Fund
Introduction (30 mins.) and
Charity Auction (1hr, 45 mins)
with Neil Gaiman and Chris Oarr
3:00 p.m. - 4:00 p.m.**

Grand Salon II

Neil Gaiman and Chris Oarr (from the CBLDF) will be giving a short presentation on the history and purpose of the CBLDF. Afterwards, the auction will commence!

**Author Readings
with Hal Clement and Holly Lisle
3:00 p.m. - 4:00 p.m.**

Salon IV

Mr. Clement and Ms. Lisle will be available in the Atrium area immediately after their readings for autographs.

**CBLDF Charity Auction (cont'd)
4:15 p.m. - 5:15 p.m.
Grand Salon II**

**Author Readings
with Tom Cool and Mike Resnick
4:15 p.m. - 5:15 p.m.**

Salon IV

Mr. Cool and Mr. Resnick will be available in the Atrium area immediately after their readings for autographs.

**Art Action
with Joe Siclari
5:30 p.m. - 6:30 p.m.
Grand Salon II**

At this time, all items from the Art Show that have three or more bids will be auctioned off.

**"Comic Books: From Idea to Finished
Product"
with Neil Gaiman, Caitlín R. Kiernan,
Pete Rawlik (mod), Charles Vess
5:30 p.m. - 6:30 p.m.
Salon IV**

Ever wondered how comic books evolve from idea to finish product? Well, we have...and now we've got panelists ideally suited to answer our questions on the process!

**Cocktails and mingling
7:00 p.m. - 7:30 p.m.
Grand Cypress A**

A cash bar will be open for everyone (of age) wanting something stronger than iced tea with their meal.

BANQUET

**7:30 p.m. - 8:30 p.m.
Grand Cypress A**

What more do you need to know?

**8:45 p.m. - 9:45 p.m., Grand Cypress
(A or B, tba)**

Guests of Honor Speeches

At this time, the Banquet area will be open to all con participants.

**Cheeblecon at Tropicon II!
10:00 p.m.-11:30 p.m.
Grand Salon II**

We had SO much fun last year, we're going to do it all again! Join us for milk and cookies and the last minute chance to submit your entries (limit of 3 per person) to the Cheeblecon Art Show and Auction. All entries will be judged by a panel and prizes will be awarded for several "Best" categories (to be decided). No entries submitted will be returned because there will be an auction immediately following the award of prizes. The proceeds from the auction will go to the "Cheeblecon Good Health to Karen Fund" to benefit Karen Shaffer (wife of Charles Vess, who is currently recuperating from serious car accident-related injuries). Monetary donations will also be accepted at this time.

**Technocracy
with Paul Cordmeyer
10:00 p.m. - 11:30 p.m.
Salon IV**

A presentation by Paul Cordmeyer on this socio-political ideology.

**Open Mike Poetry Readings
Pete Rawlik (mod)
11:45 p.m. - ?
Salon IV**

Okay, so there won't really be a microphone there, but this will be the opportunity for folks to gather and hear readings of poetry and short fictionn.



SUNDAY

**"Future of Children's Literature"
with Bob Ewart, Charles Fontenay,
Becky Peters (mod)**

10:00 a.m. - 11:00 a.m.

Grand Salon II

Our panel discusses the current and future trends of literature written for children.

**TRIVIA CONTEST, Part 2
with Donna Penz and Joe Siclari**

10:00 a.m. - 11:00 a.m.

Salon IV

This is it, the semi-finalists with the most wooden nickels face off in a winner-take-all for the ultimate honor of compiling the questions for Tropicon XVIII!

AUTHOR READING - NEIL GAIMAN

11:15 a.m. - 12:15 p.m.

Grand Salon II

Anything past, present, or in the works by Neil Gaiman. He'll decide what to read, we'll sit back and enjoy the cool Brit accent!

**"New Developments in Space
Exploration"**

**with Hal Clement, Joseph Green, Jeff
Mitchell, George Peterson (mod), Mike
Resnick**

11:15 a.m. - 12:15 p.m.

Salon IV

Another self-explanatory title. join the panel as they discuss the latest developments around the world and what it all means for us.

**Artist Guest of Honor Slide Show
with Charles Vess**

12:30 p.m. - 1:30 p.m.

Grand Salon II

This should be pretty self explanatory to you all. There will be slides of cool art. If you miss this panel, don't blame the staff!

**Author Readings
with Adam-Troy Castro and Charles
Fontenay**

12:30 p.m. - 1:30 p.m.

Salon IV

Mr. Castro and Mr. Fontenay will be available in the Atrium area immediately following their readings for autographs.

**Auctions, part 2
with Joe Siclari
1:45 p.m. - 2:45 p.m.
Grand Salon II**

Anything that needs to be auctioned off will be auctioned off at this time.

**"Jeff Mitchell Presents"
1:45 p.m. - 2:45 p.m.
Salon IV**

Jeff Mitchell, a rocket scientist from MIT, presents details about the international space station set for launch in 1999.

**Neil Gaiman and Charles Vess signing
1:45 p.m. - 2:45 p.m.
Atrium area**

This will be limited to one hour. We request that everyone observe the 3 item limit per guest, so that everyone will have an opportunity.

**Closing Ceremonies
with everyone
3:00 p.m. - 4:00 p.m.
Grand Salon II**

Parting will be such sweet sorrow, but all good things eventually come to an end. Join us as we thank guests and staff and attendees. Also, we'll get to introduce next year's vict-- er, we mean Tropicon Chairman!



Tropicon XVII Staff

Chairman	Pete Rawlik
Chairwoman	Shirlene Ananayo-Rawlik
Art Show	Becky Peters Gail Bennett
Blood Drive	Dave Lyman
Auction	Dan Foster Joe Siclari
Dealers' Rm.	Eponymous Phyte
Gaming	Ned Bush David Guillot
Hospitality	Melanie Herz Andrea Melaniesister Joe Shaumberger Judi Goodman
Hotel Liason	Joe Siclari
Programming	George Peterson Christina Santiago
Registration	Marge Norsworthy Bob Weeks David Lyman Deanna Lyman Ahava Drazin
Treasurer	Cindy Warmuth
Video Room	Joe Siclari Bill Wilson
VIP Party	Judi Goodman Cindy Warmuth Bill Wilson
WebMaster	Jack Weaver
Gophers	Edie Stern Frank Ananayo, Jr.



Charity Auctions

by Shirlene Ananayo-Rawlik

This year's charity auctions promise to hold a plethora of wonderful donations sure to encourage a lot of good spirited, enthusiastic bidding from the audience. This year, we'll be auctioning items off for more than one auction,

but I get ahead of myself.

In recent years, it has become tradition for the Guest of Honor to choose a charity that will benefit from the proceeds of the main charity auction. This year will be no different. Neil's favorite charity of choice is the Comic Book Legal Defense Fund (CBLDF).

Very simply put, CBLDF is a non-profit organization that helps individuals within the comic book industry to defend their own first ammendment rights. Neil is a major supporter and fund raiser for CBLDF and he often does benefits to educate others about CBLDF, what it does, and why it should be supported.

There will also be items auctioned off on behalf of SFSFS Clubhouse Maintenance Fund. For those of you who don't know, SFSFS has a small clubhouse. We hold mini-auctions throughout the year to raise money to maintain the clubhouse.

Fanzines will also be auctioned to benefit the Fanhistoricon Fund. Their primary goal (if you cannot discern it from the title) is to compile and preserve the history of fandom. You can own your own little bit of fan history through the purchase of a fanzine. Those will be auctioned off as time and space allow during the art auctions on Saturday and Sunday.

Additionally, we will be having an auction of art at Cheeblecon II. If you need more information on that, please read the Cheeblecon II segment on page 29 or ask the Registration staff.

It was originally intended to list all the items that were donated for the charity auction. Due to the unforeseen plethora of text, we've run out of space. Instead, we invite you to view the items that will be up for auction by visiting the Charity Auction tables in the Dealers' Room.

Lastly, we would like to thank everyone who donated items for this year's Charity Auctions. We would especially like to recognize the following individuals and/or corporate entities:

- Avon/Eos Books
- Ellen Datlow
- DC/Vertigo Comics
- Diamond Comic Distributors, Inc.
- Ahava Drazin
- Garth Ennis
- Dan Foster
- Joe Lansdale
- Pete and Shirlene Rawlik



Tropicon History

Tropicon I (Boca Raton, 1982)
GOH: Lee Hoffman
Chair: Joe Siclari

Tropicon II (Fort Lauderdale, 1983)
GOH: Marion Zimmer Bradley
Chair: Joe Siclari

Tropicon III (Fort Lauderdale, 1984)
GOH: Forest J. Ackerman
AGOH: Vincent DiFate
Chair: Joe Siclari

Tropicon IV (Fort Lauderdale, 1985)
GOH: Robert Bloch
Chair: Joe Siclari

Tropicon V (Deerfield Beach, 1986)
GOH: Gardner Dozois
Chair: Nancy Atherton

Tropicon VI (Fort Lauderdale, 1987)
GOH: George R. R. Martin
AGOH: Kelly Freas
TM: Jack L. Chalker
Chair: Gail Bennet

Tropicon VII (Fort Lauderdale, 1988)
GOH: Poul Anderson
FGOH: Walt Willis
Chair: Edie Stern

Tropicon VIII (Dania, 1989)
GOH: Lynn Abbey
FGOH: Leslie Turek
TM: C. J. Cherryh
Chairs: Judy Bemis & Tony Parker

Tropicon IX (Dania, 1990)
GOH: Hal Clement
FGOH: Bruce Pelz
Chairs: Judy Bemis & Tony Parker

Tropicon X (Dania, 1991)
GOH: Andre Norton
Chairs: Joe Siclari & Gerry Adair

No Tropicon was held in 1992 so as to help the
"war effort" (a/k/a Magicon/Worldcon 50!)

Tropicon XI (West Palm Beach, 1993)
GOH: Ramsey Campbell
Chair: Gerry Adair

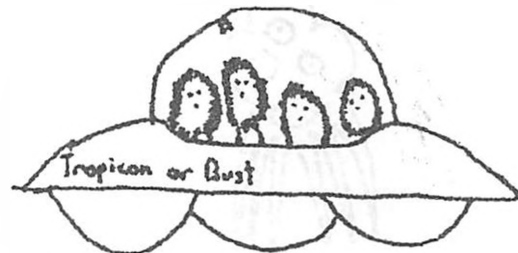
Tropicon XII (West Palm Beach, 1994)
GOH: Judith Tarr
FGOH: Gail Bennett
Chair: Fran Mullen

Tropicon XIII (West Palm Beach, 1995)
GOH: Kristine Kathryn Rusch
AGOH: Jael
TM: Ben Bova
Chair: Steve Gold

Tropicon XIV (Fort Lauderdale, Jan, 1996)
GOH: James P. Hogan
TM: Mike Resnick
Chair: Joe Siclari & Fran Mullen

Tropicon XV (Fort Lauderdale, Nov, 1996)
GOH: David Gerrold
TM: Peter David
Chair: George Peterson

Tropicon XVI (Fort Lauderdale, 1997)
GOH: Esther Friesner
TM: Josepha Sherman
Chair: Judi Goodman



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